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visions that do not fit the times. We do not mean
to be shielded by our children as old-fashioned folk
~~and up to the times~~. It seems to us that to be in touch
with the ^{times} ~~day~~ is our business as parents, so long
at any rate, as until our youngest is in his
twenties. Our children may go off at a tangent
from our line of thought & feelings, not only about
the best things, but on matters only less
dear to our hearts. This must always be
sad & cannot always be helped. But it is
a contingency to which we must be getting
ready from the beginning. We want to be
ready for them as fellow-thinkers ^{when the day comes} ~~by the way~~.

That the children are eager to set in order their
ideas about all things in heaven & earth.
Then, though we may not be able to keep them
beside us, going the way we go, we may be able
to see that ours is not ^{indefinitely} ~~certainly~~ the best way
for them: at any rate, we may secure, that we
do not part company from them lightly, nor
they are not ready, high-minded, too open to
other influence than the best. But in the
modesty of conviction they take this course,
as led by a way that they know not.
Then a party may come, & we may be suddenly
out of it, but this may need be no breach in
common daily ways, when each side is full
of utmost sincerity, humility, urgency of
conviction on the other. Oh, dear! how I am
dreading this

primary.
~~proceeding~~! You will think of those ^{condemned} ~~condemning~~ ^{religions} ~~religions~~
 of our seventeenth years, when there was nothing above
 or below. ^{ours} ~~our~~ philosophy could not settle - was
 not - equal to!

But - to bring all this into to a practical conclusion,

let think we may keep up with the children by

trying to keep in touch with the movements

of the day, ^{not} ~~not~~ plunging headlong headlong

into all the new ways of saving the world.

But, while helping all we can, we must avoid

being carried along by party spirit to

allow the ill with the good.

Next, my husband & I promise ourselves to

read steadily such books, old & new, as tend to

make their mark on character, & give some

idea of our progress, in whatever direction.

Forcing on about us. Are you laughing at

the idea of parents with such a mighty

programme? But - I think we can manage

to work through some quiet, at any rate,

by eschewing most secondary & story books -

that sort of thing.

* * * *

I begin to suspect that all this is by way

of preface & now, you the real and object of this letter.

Have you read Robert Browning? Of course you

have. & all this year, everybody has been asking

everybody that one question. We have just

done it for the second time. It has done us

much good, & made us look at many difficulties

5 / boy is his father over again.

Next to return to the book. You know that a lovely
Christ-like life the young clergymen leads, & how
heavenly-minded, - even if a little narrow - is the
woman he marries. The first volume is delightful
a story of kingdoms come; pure earthly love, even
waiting at the head waters of love, for inspiration
directions. - lanes of service. Though you already
felt there is a leak somewhere, the enemy may
anyday come in as a flood. Then, all at once
with little to lead up to it, comes the catastrophe,
a spiritual one. Elmore is bowled over, with
hardly a struggle to keep his feet, by an state an
argument - as that - "miracles don't happen!"
Then follows a kind of land-slip, bearing down
all the bulwarks of Christianity. Miracles don't
happen; therefore, the Resurrection hasn't happened;
therefore, the Christian's King is dis-crowned; God has not
spoken to man, and there is no revelation. What
is left? A falcon hope that there is a God, what
if He be, He may be gracious. Even so, what
certainty of anything beyond the grave? He me
certainly left in - our brother: he, the wretched
brother, is a - ungrateful, a fact - often an ugly one.
Wherefore, let a man make himself the victim
of this, let him gain so much abuse
from the wreck of life. Here is the sum of the
whole matter, so far as man has the
means of knowing. There may be more; but, what
knows?

It is more than a story; it is a remarkable study of
the progress of unbelief; - is, I should think -

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a most true picture of what is going on to-day in many
an undevout nature. that is why Edward and I have let
ourselves to analyze it as carefully as if it happened
to be the true story of a ^{real} living man. For, don't
you think that every now & then there are spiritual
epidemics in the air, as catching as ~~concealed~~
+ that it is the business of parents to keep their
eyes open & take measures to preserve their
children from infections? you will say, perhaps,
that it is better the young people should ask crucial
questions at any cost. than that they should
sit - sit - their ears, believing, with a lip-deep faith,
all they are told, because they care for none of
these things? I dare say it is; but then, when
they come to ask these searching questions,
I think we should be ^{ready to answer them} at least to act as
formulas for youth, but the fresh living thought of the day, as
gives forth, directing them towards the truth. Let
me tell you that there is a firm practical conclusion
we have come to about the spiritual history
of protestant-churchmen.

And first: — We all like to be in the front rank
of thinkers; for, 'tis our nature to; we follow the lead
of the most advanced school we know of till
we get an inkling of another world ahead. We
quit the old church after the new, till, behold!
others, so far on as to be nearly out of sight.
We hurry up, learn the new Shibboleths, & are of
ready till we suspect that there are more still
beyond us. This desire is amongst the foremost
which

which most of us have known in our youth, makes
little, so long as its objects are the newest things in
curtains, bonnets, or checks. But more thoughtful
natures have higher ambitions; they will thrust
with the boldest thinkers in the deep things of
life. Away with the old sanctions! All they
want is that of contemporary authority. They
live by the name of the ^{most-advanced} thinkers in the
school they have taken up with.

Even with Robert Coleman, he hunted into
the howls at Oxford, apparently unshaken;
none made a direct attack upon his principles,
he was content to be in touch with advanced
thought, yet, hold to the old ways. But no
wonder is he let loose amongst the Equis
bodies to find the ancient outworks of belief
demolished with a high hand, then, presto!
he forsakes the old at a bound, ~~and enrolls~~
himself amongst the disciples of the new. Think
what a name that man has! Consider his
deep learning sharp thinking! What can a man
do better than follow his lead? And overboard
goes the whole cargo of cherished beliefs; &
that, purely out of respect for the authority of
his contemporaries, the word of the foreword!
"What is it?" cry the outsiders in a crowd.
"Oh, 'tis a man with two heads!" is passed
from a vag in the midst, & received with
out question, for, "Sure, he ought to know!"
And, Edward says that there are two things
in

we parents should keep well in view: - the spiritual epidemics of the day; & the tendency of human nature to follow the lead of the present. These outbreaks, we must, of course, wait on, & deal with as they come. But, certainly, we can accustom our children to look contemporaneous authority, scientific or historical, fully in the face, & take it for what it is worth.

I am always thankful that, as a girl, I read a certain magazine article written by a scientific man of great eminence; for I have never since been taken off my feet by the authority of a great name. The writer had the wit to see, that Science had not a word to say about the origin of things until it could track life to its source. The crucial question, which Science had not touched, was, to him, how came there to be life, animal or vegetable, upon our globe. And now for his solution - a solution which should do away with the need of a Creator. - Some elder planet, in its course, ~~had~~ ~~about~~ ~~about~~ passing Earth in its course, had cast off a rocky fragment, which lodged upon Earth. This fragment had contained the germs, at least, of life, animal - vegetable, lodged in its crevices. & so, the rest follows! - a world clothed upon with verdure & sustaining innumerable living creatures.

It was truly a shock to me, at the time, & kind